

Hawaii MARINE ON POINT

HAWAII MARINE D SECTION

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Memorial Day

A Time To Reflect

Veterans parade their organizational colors during the 2006 Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony at the Hawaii Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe, May 29.

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The sun plays peek-a-boo with the clouds; one minute it is shining brightly on rows of empty brown medal folding chairs, the next it hides behind the clouds, casting shadows on the fragile men and women who slowly walk down the center isle looking for the seat with the best view.

Some wear hearing aids, others walk with canes or are pushed in wheelchairs, and most of them have grey or white hair. The wrinkles on their hands and faces make it hard to guess how old they are, but one can tell that most of them are pretty old.

While some look like they are in better health than others. They all have a common bond – they served in a branch of the military during a time of war.

They all made the trip to the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery during the 2006 Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony May 29 to honor those who have fallen and those who are currently serving.

As the veterans waited for the ceremony to start they made their way around the medal chairs that were now beginning to fill up. They shake each other's hand. Some give each other a hug and speak of the old days. They laugh, smile, and talk about life while they wait for the ceremony to begin.

Father Richard Rubie makes his rounds before the start of the ceremony. Pinned to his black suite jacket are medals and ribbons he earned during his time in the service. Rubie, who spent 14 years as an infantryman in the Marine Corps before becoming an Irish

Catholic priest, seemed to know all of the veterans in attendance. Every couple of steps he took, someone he knew stopped him.

The 78-year-old, who is a member of the Chosin Few, joined the Corps in 1960. He decided to become a priest because he said God called him.

"God has a way of letting you know what he wants from you," the young-spirited priest said. "It was my time to get out (of the Marine Corps)."

Everyone took his or her seats as the ceremony began. It started with a chant performed by a retired master sergeant from Hawaii's Army National Guard. Then Veterans organizations present their group's flag and floral leis.

Major General Robert G. F. Lee, Adjutant General, State of Hawaii, gave welcoming remarks to the crowd.

"No event is more important than taking the time out to remember our fallen heroes," he said, "that is precisely why we are here today. We are grateful for the time we had with them and celebrate who they were."

After Lee finished, there was a musical interlude with two performers singing "God Bless America" and "Amazing Grace." As the first song began, a few veterans could be heard softly singing, but as the song continued, the voices that were scattered throughout the crowd began to get louder as more people joined in until everyone in the audience was singing. They all continued to sing during the second song as well.

As voices concluded the song, Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle gave her Memorial Day address.

Lingle said that those who died while fighting for our country were willing to give their life for people they



A group of veterans talk amongst themselves before the start of the 2006 Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony.

did not know; for an ideal they believed in.

"Those who just returned," she said as she looked to the crowd, "you made us proud."

She said the ceremony was to honor all of those who serve in the American military and their families. She expressed her appreciation to those who have missed important events in their lives because they were deployed to help people they didn't know.

Lingle, who is known for her support for the local military, explained

that 6,700 veterans and their families rest beneath the rich soil of the Hawaii State Veterans' Cemetery and that today was to honor them – those who are still alive and those who are currently serving.

A rifle salute, taps and fly over were executed in honor of veterans every-

where. White doves, which signify peace, were released as the ceremony came to a close.

The veterans all stood up and began to, once again, talk amongst themselves. After a few more handshakes they all said goodbye and went their separate ways.



Fresh flowers and miniature American Flags adorn the graves of Hawaii's veterans who are buried at the Hawaii Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe.



A veteran places a lei at the veterans memorial at the Hawaii Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe during the 2006 Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony May 29.